

EVER HEARD OF GROUP SUPERVISION?

BY R. PEGGY SMITH

I had not heard of group supervision until Secretary Joseph D. Lehman recently alerted me to the fact the American Probation and Parole Association was doing a survey on this topic. After a month or so trying to get a hold of the survey results, I am now pleased to share what I know about this topic.

The following jurisdictions responded to this survey: Arizona, Yavapai County; Illinois Department of Corrections (DOC); Maryland DOC; Minnesota, Brown County; Minnesota, Stearns County; Northern Mariana Islands; Oklahoma; Pennsylvania, Leigh County; Texas, Jefferson County; Utah, Juvenile Court. The limited number of respondents, even taking survey response rate factors into account, makes me think that group supervision is not a very wide spread phenomenon. Of course, one does not want to draw hasty conclusions, so let's delve into the survey responses themselves.

There are three types of group supervision mentioned by the survey respondents:

- Orientation to supervision.
- Resource sharing and/or treatment follow-up.
- Routine reporting and monitoring.

Several of the jurisdictions use group sessions to allow agency staff to present an overview of the purpose of supervision and to provide suggestions about how offenders can successfully complete supervision. Having a structured presentation assures that all of the participants receive the "same message." One jurisdiction is thinking about using a video-taped presentation for this purpose. Group orientation allows a range of staff to be involved in group supervision, since no special skills are required.

Resource sharing and treatment follow-up groups have the common theme of recognizing offender needs. One jurisdiction started using an "after care" group for probationers who had completed Domestic Violence treatment. They are now expanding this modality to all clients. Several jurisdictions mentioned group sessions as an effective way to bring together offenders and service providers, educators, employers, or other relevant community organizations. This type of group supervision is more demanding on staff. Knowledge of group dynamics is a must. Further training in cognitive-behavioral approaches is often required.

The most frequently mentioned group supervision was for routine reporting and monitoring. With one exception, the respondents use this type of supervision with low risk offenders. Different jurisdictions hold such sessions with a wide range of frequency, from once a month to once a year. Group size also varies greatly. Using group supervision as a means of keeping traditional caseloads manageable, while holding low risk offenders accountable and stressing positive outcomes, is the norm.

After thoroughly reading the results of the American Probation and Parole Association Group Supervision Survey, I confirmed my original notion that this is not a very wide spread method of supervision. It is important, however, to point out the major reason the reporting jurisdictions adopted this approach. It is a means of dealing with increasing caseloads coupled with decreasing budgets. It seems to "work" besides. As one of the respondents from Minnesota said,



FOR YOUR INFORMATION..

BOOK/PUBLICATION OF THE MONTH

American Probation and Parole Association Group Supervision Survey, 2004. Available in printed form in the Planning and Research Library, 3rd Floor, Headquarters. Mailed by request.

WEB SITE OF THE MONTH

The American Probation and Parole Association home page is a source of extensive information about this organization. <http://www.appa-net.org>

DEFINITION OF THE MONTH

Outcome:

1. A final consequence: RESULT (Webster)
2. Program results or impacts on clients and society (*Performance Measurement Concepts and Techniques*, American Society for Public Administration.)

DOC MONTHLY STATISTICS AS OF FEBRUARY 29, 2004

CONFINEMENT POPULATION

Total Confinement	16,665
Work Release	15,746
Out of State Rented Beds	685
Out of State Rented Beds	234

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS POPULATION

ACTIVE SUPERVISION	32,923
RMA	7,455
RMB	6,503
RMC	4,095
RMD	12,027
Unclassified	2,843
MONETARY	18,048
INACTIVE STATUS	21,343

ESCAPES FROM SECURITY LEVELS 2-5, FOR FY04

	Date	Type	Return
Stafford Creek	08/29/03	Facility	08/29/03
Ahtanum View	09/01/03	Facility	09/08/03
Tacoma PR	10/29/03	Off-Site	12/16/03
MCC -Twin Rivers	11/01/03	Facility	11/09/03
Olympic	12/13/03	Facility	12/14/03
Pine Lodge PR	12/24/03	Facility	12/24/03
Ahtanum View	01/04/04	Facility	01/04/04

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"Change is always difficult and the belief that you can't accomplish (getting) personal information in a group setting, space to hold the groups, designing the check in form, and getting offenders to show up at designated times.... I can't really think of anything negative from agent or client perspectives. Our feed back from group participants has been very positive. Agents have more time to be in the field actually supervising than stuck in the office with appointments, paperwork, etc."